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FAVORS.

BY PAULINE K. PILKINGTON FILER.

Oh, my heart's springtime beauty,
Crocuses so blue!
Budding 'neath the melting snow,
Blooming where the north winds blow
Waxen petals through;
Will you drop your hue of skies
Asleep deep into my eyes,
Crocuses so blue?

Oh, my love, my summer darling,
Roses rare and red;
Budding, blooming, budding, blooming,
Stately now, and now cheek-flushing,
Smiling overhead;
Will you kiss me on my cheek,
From my lips? Oh, will you? Speak!
Roses rare and red.

Oh, my love, my autumn loved one,
Fruitfully white;
Bending in the south wind sighing,
Watching while the fall is dying
In the silent night;
Will you let your perfume roll
From your cheek to my soul,
Fruitfully white?

Oh, my love, my winter darling,
Snowflakes pure and light;
Falling, drifting, floating, flying,
On the frozen cornfields lying,
Autumn's evergreen white;
Will you make my soul so pure
Stains will fade for evermore,
Snowflakes pure and light?

A WOMAN'S VOW.

BY MARY E. WOODSON.

CHAPTER I.

A FASHIONABLE WEDDING.

"One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six! Seven! Eight!"

Thus spoke the great monitor of the night of time, from the belfry in the heart of A—, as it tolled the hour of the morning, on the 12th day of October in the year of our Lord 1873.

"One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six! Seven! Eight!"
echoed the brass tongues of a dozen bells—city and suburban—ringing out in a great, almost simultaneous clash on the still, humid atmosphere: in which, despite the hoarse grating of the mighty machine of metropolitan life, every footfall echoed with a treble distinctness; every rattling car assumed the thunders of an Alpine avalanche. Ah, God save the bells, when—

"Every sound that floats
From the rust within their throats
Is a cross."

clashing, meaning, sobbing, roaring like a band of dying Sienois, pouring like a length and breadth and depth of their power in a sound; screaming defiantly in the ears of the half-waking Sybarite, or the absorbed pleasure-seeker—"One more span in the linear measure of your brief life is clotted off," as though, in very deed they felt a spiteful glory in so rolling

"On the human heart a stone."
"One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six! Seven! Eight!"
Nine! Ten! Eleven! Twelve!"
rang out the big bell from the tower of St. Paul's church, in a strain too protracted and monotonous to be interesting from the mere enumeration; but a touch more melodious perhaps, when conveying the intelligence that the ceremony of marriage was about to be performed in the sacred edifice.

The church-warden himself seemed to catch the inspiration of the occasion; for he grasped the pulleys of the steeple-chase with a nervous power, not always displayed in the normal service, and rang forth a clangor, stormy enough to awake the bride, should she still be asleep in her maiden chamber, almost in any quarter of the city, proclaiming that the hour of eight, the hour for the ceremony, had arrived.

This done, "Othello's occupation" for the time at least appeared gone. The sexton yawned, stretched himself, and beat a tattoo upon the railing in front of him. After waiting awhile, however, he gave the bell-wires another series of jerks that threw the noisy creature into a fair tempest of passion, and finally lounged into the galleries to watch the slow gathering of the parties: evidently imagining that he had ample time for any little by-play, as no one ever yet expected a wedding ceremony precisely at the hour specified.

So completely had this idea taken possession of him that he started with positive surprise on beholding the figure of a young man just before him in the gallery. He glanced quickly down, under a vague impression that he had been dreaming, and that the body of the church must already be full of spectators.

Recovering himself however on seeing the long aisles still vacant, he turned his eyes upon the stranger, as though regarding him in the suspicious light of an unbidden and, perhaps, undesired intruder.

"The church is still empty, sir. If you will go below, you can obtain a seat near the altar, where the bridal party can be distinctly seen. There will be a great crowd in a few moments now."

"Aye, true!" "The bridal party," I had been thinking it was a funeral," muttered the stranger, passing his hand hurriedly over his brow.

"Hush you, no," answered the other, with the characteristic loquacity of a sexton—"there is more life in one wedding than in a dozen funerals. And this wedding, sir! Why the banns have been read out Sunday after Sunday. Yet people will never cease to wonder at the marvellous

good fortune of a young girl with nothing but her pretty looks and her winning ways, marrying the great millionaire that all the grand ladies have been dying after, so long."

"The people are great fools, my good friend. What is there, from poor little human hearts, the trashiest and most insecure of earthly possessions, to the highest honors of church or state, that is not at the bidding of gold?"

"You are too young a man to have thoughts like that," said the worthy sexton, positively shocked. "God forbid I should hint that fair Florence Eglington has been so possessed by the devil, as to sell her fine accomplishments and her winsome face to Carroll Treemilian without her heart. He is not an old man yet, sir, by many a year; and with the brains they say he has, his name would have been a fortune in itself. Why should she not love him?"

"Ah, why indeed?" said the other, with a strange smile. "But the church is rapidly filling, worthy man; and I shall remain up here."

"I too, sir. I thought you might be a friend, and so wish to give your congratulations to the new couple. If you'll come up to the other end, sir, over the chancel, you can get a better view."

The stranger followed him with a look that might have indicated a preference for being alone; but as the old man turned to retire a few paces, the other motioned him, with a wave of the hand, that seemed like a command, to the seat pointed out to himself; and quickly sinking into the one immediately behind him, rested his hand upon his shoulder, with a whispered "I prefer it so," that must have settled the question, in spite of any demur the inferior party might have been disposed to offer. When, at that moment, the hush of expectation reached its climax; and all eyes were directed toward the central aisle.

There was before the face of the old sexton, an indistinct vision of a little figure, clad in an imperial train of white satin—a face whose radiant loveliness could be discerned even by his dimmed vision, discolored with its queenly crown of golden tresses, with the misty veil depending; leaning upon the arm of a tall, manly form, that consoled not ill with her matchless grace.

The stranger, leaning forward, took in the whole scene at a glance—making the old sexton feel uncomfortable, as he noted the unusual light that burned with consuming intensity in his eyes—the strange pallor that rested like the shadow of death upon his face.

"Blessed!" muttered the old man. "He'll need the services of the church soon; and it will be at a funeral this time, sure. God rest his spirit; for the evil one is in that eye yet."

But the young man still looked fixedly down, where the bride and groom, kneeling at the rail of the altar, were murmuring the vows of the service.

"I can't see her from this distance," muttered the sexton, querulously, upon whom, in spite of every effort to dispel it, a disagreeable impression had been gradually stealing.

"I have watched her pretty face many a day, when the younger men were all dying for a glance from her bright eyes, as she'd trip into church and run lightly up to her place in the choir. She'd scarcely give them a passing notice; but she always had a kind word for the old sexton. And her voice! what a voice! You never heard her, I suppose, sir, but if you had, you'd forget your own name sooner. I think I hear it ringing through the old dome now. Your eyes are younger

than mine, sir. Will you be kind enough to look and tell me if her countenance beams with joyous light as of old—if her lips wear the same sunny smile? I pray God she loves him with the fervor of her glad, young heart."

"Old man, you prate like a schoolboy. Has the fatal spell of her wicked, wayward beauty galvanized even your slumbering pulses into such a semblance of young life? Thank God that you do see dimly—that the tidal rush of youth's fever had all ebbed away ere she crossed your path. You ask me for her picture. Your fair saint's brow is as serene as that of the marble virgin in the cathedral across the street."

"Thank God it is so!" exclaimed the old man, vehemently. "I knew she must love him. But tell me once more, looks she down blushing, as though afraid to meet his glance?"

"As blushing as the rose, as modest as the drooping violet. Yet there is no deeper, most in her thoughts but a consciousness of the clever trick she has played upon her friends in outwitting all their calculations."

"Holy St. Francis!" exclaimed the bell-ringer. "He is assuredly possessed of a devil. Listen, sir, to the pious exhortation from the lips of the worthy Doctor Cushing."

The words of the worthy divine, with the responses of the kneeling couple, arose more clearly as the service approached its conclusion, and the ears of all were listening for the accustomed formula of benediction.

"Aye! By St. George, of Treves! they are man and wife now!" exclaimed Pat, "in spite of all your jargon."

He did not look to see the effect of his words, as the stranger's head was bowed upon the railing in front of him. The humble but zealous advocate of the fair bride walked slowly down the length of the gallery, never looking back until the last vestige of her long train had swept out at the door, and the body of the church was once more empty.

"Now, sir, you can go on before, while I close up."

He waited a moment to see the form of his unknown companion pass down in advance of him. Waiting in vain, he turned back, and beheld the figure of the man reclining where he had left him, evidently unmindful of the fact that they were again alone.

"Now, by the horns of the altar, this must be a madman, or else," and he shivered a little. "It is the spirit of the Evil One, sent to tempt me. I am going to close the church, sir. Can you go?"

He had reached the stranger's side, and the query was propounded rather timidly, while he touched him lightly on the shoulder. Receiving no answer, he leaned over, and the dead whiteness of the young man's face, more dead than ever, for the eyes were closed—sent a new chill of fear to his heart.

"I must call back Dr. Cushing from the sacristy," he said, with a face almost as pale as the one he had left. "I say, father, good father, or doctor Cushing," he called out with increasing terror as he neared the chancel; "the devil is let loose in St. Paul's!"

your excellency, father, doctor I mean, the devil has come into the gallery, and will not be driven out, first uttering profanities and then feigning to be dead. Come, good Dr. Cushing. Come away."

"Good beast, good ass, good fool, I will not," said the distinguished divine, more warmly than was his custom. "Tell me instantly what you are babbling about?"

"He is half-reclining on a bench, good sir, in the form of a man, but with the whiteness of a ghost," returned Pat, somewhat reassured by the intrepidity of the pastoral head.

"Aye, in the form of a man!" repeated the divine, sternly. "But with a soul not above the brutes. Some drunken, mocking reveller from the haunts of sin, fallen asleep in the house of God. Let me behold!"

He had ascended the steps with angry strides, anxious to behold no daring a disquiet, when he found himself too soon face to face with a young man, upon whom he had cast but a single glance, when he colored and bowed, rather in the form of an apology than a rebuke.

"Mr. Treemilian, I had no idea you were here. I fear you have been ill?"

A passing apoplexy, doctor, unusual, I should not have ventured here. It is true Mr. Treemilian thought me sick at my lodgings."

The young man lifted his hat again, bowed coldly, and descending the steps with the tread of a man but little accustomed to solicit aid from any earthly source, entered the only remaining cab at the door.

"The bride has breakfasted by this and gone, sir. Will you go straight to the train?" asked the driver.

"No. I have no business there. To my lodgings, No. 113 Bank street," he answered, briefly, and the solitary vehicle rolled over the stony street in the direction indicated.

"Why are the fates subservient to my behests in all things else?" he murmured, with a hoarse despair. "The forum is henceforth air, action, life to me. The Latin and Pindar must be ruthlessly supplanted from their pedestals. No matter, I shall help to trample them false gods in the dust henceforth. I am an iconoclast from today. A man whose only mistress is Fame, both the instruments of an imperious purpose, and woe to that man whose hand shall withstand me! Woe to the weak and fainting that shall cry to me for mercy! Henceforth Earle Templeton shall know neither love nor compassion! Love! it is the one counterpoise of all the weak fools on earth; and, mark me, I shall grow strong!"

CHAPTER II.

RALPH THORNTON.

A quieter place than Coldham for the theatre of a great tragedy could scarcely be imagined, and yet to Coldham I must transport my readers for the unfolding of the painful story before me.

A demi-village of itself, about two and a half miles out on the road from A—, and yet with such an air of rustic quiet about it that Cleopatra might have selected it, had it lain in another quarter of the globe, for the scene of his great literary pursuits, and adorned it with his millions of money. A Catina or a Charles V., wearied with the intrigues of a Court, might have found a peace and repose among its shades which they had vainly sought in the great world.

Perhaps some such thoughts as these may have influenced Carroll Treemilian, many years back, in making Coldham his

home; we cannot tell; but if so, he had the eye of an artist and the soul of a poet.

There were white cottages twinkling through the yet green foliage here and there, and a carpet of yet green velvet moss beneath the shady grove and by the river's side, though these were autumn days, almost weird in their soft witchery, very.

"Stragglers from the flow of June."

You might have fancied it, with all its advantages of nature, an unpretending place enough, as you strolled over the sparsely settled hamlet. It is true there were many a laborer among the ripening corn on the hills that spread away almost limitlessly, but the women and children about these cottages had the pleasing yet unmistakable stamp of thrifty mediocrity about them.

On an eminence just away from the river, however, that here seemed to curve into a thousand meanderings, embowered in the centre of a park of century oaks, stood the main dwelling—a dwelling handsome enough, if architects and upholsterers had ever smiled upon a work of art, for Cleopatra or Charles V., or any other of the great men that have ever lived, wherein to pass their threescore years and ten.

There were lofty gables and turrets almost above the oak tops, bay windows here, and unbroken granite walls beyond, that might induce you to pause in mute speculation over the capacities of this dwelling, wondering if the capacious owner might not have stopped a first class hotel half-way in its construction, and completed it into a splendid structure for a family numerically equal to that of Latona.

Nevertheless the windows of this establishment were thrown open, and the sound of hammer, rat-tat! rat-tat! in quick succession broke the stillness of the outside atmosphere, as a young man lifted the latch of the iron gate that swung back at his touch, and passed up the walk, paved with alternate squares of Egyptian and Parian marble.

This young man was, by name, Ralph Thornton. There was little else to tell. He had little or no pedigree, and, perhaps, in the eyes of our haughty aristocrats, a little less than no station, being a sort of second-hand manager or agent for Mr. Carroll Treemilian, the wealthy owner of the great house before him; and yet the haughtiest of the visitors who ever crossed that door would scarcely have passed this young man without a second look at his bright, cheerful face, and well-knit, active form.

Ralph Thornton was something above five feet ten inches in height. He was dressed like any other young gentleman in the sundry pursuits of life. He wore a dark, curled coat, dark vest and light gray pants, with a stripe a la militaire down the sides, and as he took off his light round hat, the finely rounded head, with its clustering curls of a hue between brown and black, presented an outline that would have riveted a painter's eye. His features, though good, were of no decided cast, but the ever varying expression of his countenance lent to them a charm, a happy, joyous charm, which the wearied worldling or the misanthrope would have envied to the last degree, though they might have sneered at it as "boyish" in the extreme. In his full gray eyes there was neither look of sadness nor mistrust, and yet soft shadows were coming and going in them, the mute reflections of tender heart images to which the soul had as yet offered an unallied devotion.

There was no look of wonder or of awe as he passed under the frowning arch, and laying his hat upon a matchless cleopatra,

moved with a quick, ringing tread over the tessellated floor of the long hall. The pictures of dead and gone Treemilians looked coldly down at him in powdered hair and diamonds and stately velvet robes from their niches in the walls, more ghostly and dead looking than ever, through the glass hangings now suspended over them; but the young man's native ease did not desert him as he passed up the broad oaken staircase, through a corridor in which some men were kneeling down carpeting of white and crimson velvet, of such thickness that Ralph Thornton fancied "all the king's horses and all the king's men" might pass over it without awakening an echo.

"Where is the superintendent, Mr. Orderly?" he asked, in a cheery, ringing tone.

"In one of the rooms on the left, sir," replied one of the men, respectfully.

Ralph Thornton opened the massive mahogany door nearest to him and looked in. "Ah, Mr. Orderly, I am glad to find you," said Ralph, going across to where a corpulent man in eye glasses, with a look that Mr. Treemilian might have envied, stood directing another square of shibboleth underlaid in hanging the heavy mirrored doors of French plate-glass to a wardrobe that could have held all the dresses of Queen Elizabeth. "I have a message from Mr. Treemilian."

"Lord help us! but I hope he's not coming sooner than he intended," cried Mr. Orderly, surveying the hanging of an arranged furniture with a look of dismay.

"No," answered Philip, with a smile that he could not altogether repress lurking in the corners of his brown mustache, "they are still in Paris, and will not be at home for the next two weeks. But you have all the work you have done to go over again. He has shown Mrs. Treemilian a plan of the house, and she prefers her chamber and dressing-room in the right wing, on the first floor; so the furniture designed for those rooms is to be moved down there, and any other set you may select at here."

"Ha!" cried Mr. Orderly, a little in anger, "my lady grows whimsical. Always the case when a gentleman takes for his wife a person whose parents had scarce a dollar to bless themselves with. Who ever heard of a bride that knew anything about style, selecting a chamber on the first floor? I should have made these rooms here fit for a queen."

"I would advise you to be cautious how you speak, if you expect to retain the patronage of this house, Mr. Orderly," said Ralph, with a grave face. "Mr. Treemilian is a man of great taste, and will require the world—but especially his servants and retainers, some of whom may be within hearing—to receive her as such. The furniture is to be changed, as I say, and Mr. Treemilian's private requests that you suffer your carpets to remain up here, and that you send to his commandant, the chante, Karl & Grobe, for the rolls he has dispatched from a house in Paris, to be used in Mrs. Treemilian's apartments, and in the lower rooms."

"And why was that?" cried the upholsterer, still in anger. "I have nothing to do with it, if Mrs. Treemilian should select the kitchen, or one of the out-houses, for her chamber. But my carpets, sir—I will tell you, or Mr. Treemilian himself—as handsome as any in Paris. The looms of Genoa or Constantinople never were better."

"You may discuss their relative merits with Mr. Treemilian, then," said Ralph Thornton. "My part of the transaction is over; I have delivered his orders, and it only remains for you to execute them or not, as you think proper."

And the young man turned on his heel, and descended again to the first floor—turning as he did so, to consider the long suite of rooms that here lay hushed in their regal splendor, with the mellow sunlight streaming across them.

He turned his eyes in a mute, undemonstrative admiration, from the dazzling furniture to the octagonal walls, and began to notice the little bits of tapestry there were scenes and representations here that had no special significance for the beholder, as he had never been favored with a classical education—scenes, many of them, from a far back heathenism. Action and his dogs starting the timid deer, or chasing the flying hare, might have been the hunter of yesterday in the fields, for aught he knew, and Cupid, joining the sport, was coupled with no higher, or more distant association, in his mind; yet he gazed on each and all with a freshness that had something even more charming about it, than anything in a by-gone mythical lore.

"How strangely that day has declined such things!" muttered the young man, in a tone that had, however, no ring of envy about it. "And what a veritable Alps of that great barrier called 'social distinction,' will rise up between Mrs. Treemilian, who will queen it here, and Mrs. Thornton, who is to be, in her unpretending cottage but a few hundred yards off. My darling Mary, would we be happier here than we shall be in our humble home? Or is Mrs. Treemilian, fairer, gentler, or more lovable than you are?"

Lost in such speculations, he stood gazing about him, until the rapidly sinking sun warned him that the day was declining, and the house must soon be closed for the night. Then he turned and retraced his way out into the hall, and down the tessellated walk.

Still absorbed in his own thoughts he had reached the gate, and turned down the main highway, leading home, when he saw an old woman staggering along the



RALPH THORNTON AND THE STRANGE WOMAN.

"IN PARIS, WITH A YOUNG WIFE, SPENDING LOTS UPON LOTS OF PRECIOUS MONEY, WHILE I'M STARVING!" CRIED THE WOMAN, WITH A HOARSE MORT OF DESPAIR. "WHAT RIGHT HAS SHE TO A WIFE, WHEN I'M TO BE TOOK CARE OF?"

this time to-morrow—that is one comfort. But how comes it that you are here? I don't fancy that you were ever my friend."

"Don't say that, William." "Well, well," answered the young man, impatiently, "we won't quarrel over a trifle. Thank you for bringing Madeline, at any rate. Cousin," and he stretched out his hand to her, with a timid air—"tell me that you do not believe me guilty."

"I do not—I never did," she answered, bravely.

"Thank you, I know, somehow, that you would judge me right, and I have been waiting to ask you a great favor, cousin."

"You know I will grant it if I can." "I have a child," the prisoner went on, and the tears he kept out of his eyes were in his voice; "she is with her grandfather, and he is a stern, hard man. He will teach her to hate me, to be ashamed of my very name; and she will believe him!"

He almost broke down here, but rallied quickly, and went on: "Will you talk to her sometimes of me, and tell her that the last time we met, you and I, I went her my love, and solemnly swore, in God's name, that I was innocent of the crime laid to my charge? If she sees that you believe this, she will believe too, and understand that I am rather a martyr than a murderer."

"I will tell her," replied Madeline, in a stifled voice; "but I am sure you do your father-in-law injustice. However much he may hate and suspect you himself, he will take care that little Dolly respects you."

"Will you ask him?"

"You don't know him as I do. He will glory in avenging his child by teaching mine to shudder at the very sound of my name."

"I trust not; I think not."

"Because you are so gentle and kind yourself, Madeline, that you cannot resist others as so different."

Mr. de Lacy came forward, then, and spoke, but it seemed as if he, too, was pained by the sight of Wild Will's wretched condition, for he carefully avoided his eyes as he said, "I had a motive in coming here to-day, William, and the time is come to speak of this motive. You know that I am your nearest relative, I suppose?"

"I have always understood so."

"Blood is stronger than water, and I am come to release you from life-long bondage and unutterable misery and degradation," said the old squire, with emboldened self-abandonment. "You have only to obey me, and an hour hence you will be free."

"I—free?"

And a flash of light, like a sunbeam piercing through a dark cloud, brightened the shadows on his face.

"Oh, Mr. de Lacy, I have never injured you, at any rate. You could never be so unmerciful as to give me a hope that must never be realized."

"I speak advisedly," was the calm reply; "with ordinary caution, you may leave your prison, presently, a free man."

The prisoner dropped his head on his clasped hands, and, gradually, as if by miracle, he came to his feet. "I should never have seen Dolly again, if I had been condemned to pass my life with thieves and murderers, over yonder. Death was infinitely better! Oh, Madeline, appealing to her, half-irrationally, "he would not tell me this if it were not for my reverence for this noble child here."

"Nay," she answered, with her divine smile, "I know nothing, William; but my father always speaks the truth."

"And he will save me?"

"Nay, he says so."

"Thank God!—thank God! But I cannot believe what he has said, prisoner, steadily. Ask him yourself, Madeline; no one dares lie in your presence."

"I tell you that he cannot lie," she said, with a faith so perfect, that it abashed Mr. de Lacy. "I trust him always—only next to my Maker."

"But it is impossible—impossible!" the prisoner cried. "I am to leave England to-morrow, you know, and there is no little time left."

"But it is enough," replied Mr. de Lacy, huskily. "I shall take your place, presently, and you will take mine; only I must see you once, first, Madeline, please, turning to her, "I did not tell you of my intention, but I know you would approve. They will only punish me a little; and if your cousin is innocent—"

"I swear I am innocent!" interrupted Wild Will—"I swear it by my hope of Heaven!—I swear it by the love of my father, and by the love of this noble child here."

"That is enough," replied Mr. de Lacy, steadily; and he took out his watch. "We have exactly five-and-twenty minutes left; and you and I are much of the same bright and figure."

Madeline began to understand her father then; but she also noted a word of remonstrance or appeal. She simply went up to him, and kissed him tenderly.

Wild Will had the feeling to say, "I ought not to accept this sacrifice, Mr. de Lacy. I am sure Madeline will suffer."

The old squire answered, with strange solemnity, "She may suffer, but I will not; the resolution may be her only comfort, and please for me with her, as nothing else could. Let me have my way, William. I only wish the sacrifice were greater, that the merit might be greater, too."

"We may be sure that the prisoner made no further objection after this; and Mr. de Lacy seemed to take an odd kind of pleasure in preparing him for the part he was to play, and assuming himself the coarse prison dress."

"This was no time to play the prude, even if it had been in Madeline's nature, so she simply turned her head, and waited to be told when she might look."

And then she was staggered by the perfection of the disguise. Her father had worn a white wig over his own hair, which he had cut short, and dyed black.

Wild Will had been closely shaved on entering the prison, and Mr. de Lacy wore no beard. Their height and figure, as the latter had said, were much the same, and the alterations, so skillfully managed, converted Wild Will into an old man, whilst Mr. de Lacy might pass muster for a while for a young fellow of five-and-twenty. He had taken the precaution to conceal his face in entering the prison, and his confidence in the success of his stratagem inspired Wild Will with equal assurance, and quieted his tremors.

"Don't over-act your part, that is all," said the old squire, calmly. "Madeline will manage the rest."

He had scarcely done speaking, before the key grated in the lock, and the turnkey opened the heavy door, calling out abruptly, "Time up!"

attenuated frame as he felt the free air playing once more on his heated cheek.

If Madeline had suffered in leaving her father behind, there was no sign of it, that he could see, as she turned toward him, with a faint, sweet smile.

"The future is yours now," she said, softly; "and I know that it will be very different to the past. You have my father's purse, and I fancy it's fall; make use of the money first to escape, and then to live. It's not for me to lecture you, William, and there is no need. Little Dolly will never be ashamed of her father now."

"Never!" he sobbed.

"Take care!" she whispered, warningly—"there is a cab! God bless you, William!"

"God bless you!"

And, seizing her hand, he carried it to his lips.

She stood on the pavement a moment, and when he looked out presently, as the carriage rolled away, the smile was still on her lips, and the tears were waiting for a more convenient time.

CHAPTER XXIV.
THE WHITE LADY AGAIN.

Captain Vane still lingered at Brierton—he could hardly tell why, for his friend was gone, but the place had strange fascination for him always, and it was difficult to tear himself away.

Day after day he would go to the stile where Winifred had appointed to meet him, and sit there, almost expecting that she would keep her tryst still, even if she must needs rise from her grave to meet him.

The willow-tender over the river whispered softly together, and it was always of Winifred—Winifred, dead in her sweet prime, but true to the last.

Why should he seek to evade these tender memories? It was all that he had left of her now.

He did not wish to bury his dead out of sight, and forget—or, may be, how down before another shrine. Her very name was woven into his life, and his love had lost nothing, except hope.

Often the shades of evening fell upon him as he lingered, and the river bore a dense, black line, reflecting back a single star that managed to pierce the foliage overhead.

And Captain Vane loved this star, because it shone down on the place where Winifred's pure spirit had passed, and had no fear of the cruel, treacherous waters.

Sometimes a terrible temptation assailed him, to make an end of it all. But he knew he could trust himself to resist, or he would never have allowed himself to return again and again as he did now.

Sometimes he passed the whole day lingering about the place, waiting for her. Would she never come? If she only knew how he yearned after her, perhaps she would try to make some sign.

Once, as the short autumn day was drawing to a close, he fancied he saw something white stir the branches on the brink of the pool; and gradually, as he gazed, there came out of the mist a pale, calm face—the face of Winifred, his beloved.

Spell-bound, fascinated, he tried to stretch out his arms, and utter a cry; but, looking at him with grave, tender eyes, she made a slight gesture, as if to warn him away, and suddenly vanished.

For a minute or more, Captain Vane could not move; and then the spell was withdrawn, as it seemed to him, and he sprang toward the place where he had seen Winifred.

He tore the branches aside, and peered above and below, but there was no sign of her anywhere. How should there be, since she was dead?

Thus he reasoned with himself, but reasoned in vain. He had seen her twice, in moments when he was perfectly calm, perfectly reasonable, and could not have been deceived.

He did not believe that the spirits of the dead were allowed to walk on the earth; but he believed that Winifred had been with him in answer to his passionate prayer.

He turned homeward at last, in a very sober mood, but comforted, too. As he came to the lane that led to the farm-yard, he saw a shadowy figure standing close to the hedge, as if waiting for him.

Thinking it might be some poor way-faring man who was seeking alms, Captain Vane, with a heart softened by trouble, felt in his pocket for a small coin, which he meant to bestow upon him as he passed.

But, when he had advanced a few steps, something in the attitude of the man struck him as stealthy and menacing, and he prepared to stand on the defensive should his suppositions prove correct.

Keeping a wary eye on every movement of the supposed mendicant, he advanced quickly, but cautiously; and he was so far prepared for an attack by the time, that he met it without flinching, and skillfully parried the blow that was aimed at his head.

"What, you again, Stephen Young?" said the young officer, as he bent forward to examine the other's features. "I should have thought you would have been satisfied with one failure."

"I haven't failed yet."

The last time I had the pleasure of seeing you, you were in a very lowly position, if you remember," said Captain Vane, with a quiet laugh, that expressed rather disdain than merriment. "Did you like your position so much, that you are anxious to try it again?"

"No; I think I'd rather you tried it this time."

"Supposing I object?"

"I don't mean to give you your choice." And Captain Vane heard a sudden click, and felt something odd touch his hand in passing.

On second, and life, which is so sweet, even to those who seem to have very little to live for, would have been over for Captain Vane; but, with great presence of mind, he threw up Stephen's arm, and the discharge scattered in the air harmlessly.

Wrenching the pistol from him, the young officer said, in a deep, stern voice, "You are a cowardly rascal; and I'll take care you are punished for this!"

No saying, he flung him from him; and Stephen, as he rolled in the ditch, clutching, panting, at the stump of a tree to steady himself, and drew another pistol from his breast.

Dragging himself up, he took steady aim at Captain Vane's retreating figure; but before he could draw the trigger, his foot slipped, and the whole of the contents of the pistol were lodged in his own breast.

Hearing the report, and finding himself hurt, Captain Vane turned back to see what was the matter, and found his adversary bleeding and insensible at the bottom of the ditch.

He was a generous enemy, accordingly; for, instead of passing by and leaving him to his fate, as he richly deserved, the young officer lifted him carefully in his arms, and although he staggered under the weight, managed to convey him to the farm.

Mr. Merridew caught sight of his lodger as he neared the house, and his ruddy face was blanched as he came forward to ask what was the matter.

A few brief sentences served to explain the state of affairs; but even then Captain Vane did not tell the whole truth. Supposing this should be a lesson to Stephen, he was determined to give him another chance.

He, therefore, simply explained that the pistol had gone off by accident, and wounded the young farmer; who, at this moment, opened his eyes, and said, faintly, as if he could not to his full senses at last, "It was all my own fault, and I deserved it. But I have been quite mad since Delia left."

"That wasn't the way to get her back," said the old farmer, who loved little Delia, and had always had his doubts as to the expediency of her marriage.

"I know that; but I tell you I was desperate."

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it is all we can do. I have told them to insert the advertisement half a dozen times; and if this fails, I hardly know what to suggest. If Stephen is so dangerously wounded as the doctor seems to say, Delia ought to be here."

"Of course she ought; and I take it rather hard that she did not leave me her address."

"Then you would have told her husband, for a certainty, Mrs. Merridew."

"And quite right, too, sir. Those whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder."

"I don't fancy God joined those two, Mrs. Merridew."

"But the person did, and that is the same thing."

"Not exactly," he said, with a faint smile; and he thought of the perfect union that had once been promised him—an union the person would have sanctified, but certainly not made."

"Well, Mrs. Merridew said, decidedly, "perhaps you had better opinions—I dare say, and mine are that you should always try to do your duty conscientiously, and take your chance of the rest. When father told me to marry John, I should have liked to say 'No' if I had dared, and yet where do you want to see a happier couple than us two?"

"But Mr. Merridew is a very different kind of man to Stephen Young."

"Maybe he is; but there's always something to put up with, sir. However, that is neither here nor there. I'll send you a letter to the post directly, and I only hope it may bring her back. Delia in my dream, even if Stephen has worse faults than most, he loves the child dearly in his own way, and it's hard she shouldn't be with him at the last."

Two days passed, and on the evening of the second, Stephen, awaiting out of a faint hope, said, plaintively, to his mother, "I think Delia will come home, Mrs. Merridew. If she isn't quick, it will be too late."

An unexpressed sob was his only answer. "I know what you mean," he added, in an irritable tone, "but it isn't true. I wish she would come home, and I think she was sitting beside me, with her hand in mine. Dreams sometimes come true, you know."

"Yours has come true, Stephen!" was the gentle response.

He raised himself painfully, and peered anxiously through the gathering twilight at the little figure standing motionless at the foot of his bed.

Mrs. Merridew's proportions were very substantial, but his new nurse had a light, slim waist, and slender arms, gleaming white through the gloom.

He gazed at her with beautiful soft eyes, and a shapely head washed down by the shining masses of brown hair; and her pale hands, as they fluttered out to meet him, were like white doves settling on a warm nest.

It was only Delia who could look like this.

He bade her come near, and then held her back, the better to assure himself that it was really she.

"I have wanted you so badly!" he sobbed out then.

"Poor Stephen!"

"Nay, rich Stephen, now!"

"At Delia's momentous at last, that he loved her truly, even if his way was not her way, and she bowed her face down to his breast."

"I am sorry I went away," she murmured. "Can you forgive me?"

"I can forgive you everything—anything you wish to say to me, and I think I will never leave you again, Stephen."

She murmured, firmly, "But if I did wrong, I have been punished, too. It has been a weary, weary struggle since I went away. Sometimes I have even wanted bread."

"Oh, my darling, and I had so much!"

"But I had not the heart to share it with you. I preferred to live by my own labor; and labor brings scars, or my abilities so poor, I well-nigh starved. I only tell you this that you may see how far I have expiated my sin. Perhaps, if we both try very hard, we may be happy together now."

"But, Delia, I am dying," he said, in a voice of terrible anguish. "I knew you would come too late."

"Or, rather, that I should come just in time."

Stephen sighed mournfully.

"I have shown you my life, Delia, and there is no help for it now. I have nothing to thank but my own evil passions. Captain Vane was very patient with me—I must acknowledge that, although I cannot help hating him still."

"You have no reason to hate him, Stephen."

"Don't take his part, then," returned the wounded man, with a dash of his old fierce temper. "I want to die in peace with all men if I can."

"Or, rather, live in peace with all men," insisted his wife, gently.

"That is no chance for me now."

"Why not? I am a good nurse."

And she smiled at him as Delia had never smiled at him before.

"But you can't want me to live, Delia!"

"Indeed I do. Remember that I have something to atone for as well as you; and, perhaps, you may find out the way to happy thoughts after we come back."

They have both had a lesson, and we have both suffered. These things should draw us together; and I came back with the intention of doing my duty faithfully, if you will only make it easy for me."

destroying his only chance of life which lay in perfect quiet, that at last Delia came to a resolution which, although it entailed a painful sacrifice, she felt to be right."

Leaving her husband comfortably asleep, with the idea that Captain Vane was out, she crept down stairs, and knocked timidly at the young officer's door.

"Come in," said Captain Vane; and he was greatly surprised, and the least degree embarrassed, perhaps, when he found out who his visitor was.

Delia looked painfully confused, and her voice shook as she said, with a little courtesy, "I have come to ask you a great favor, sir."

"Then, I am sure, it is already granted, Mrs. Young."

She started slightly at the name he gave her, for she had always been Delia to him before. But she appeared to recognize the propriety of the amendment, and to gain courage at the thought that she could never have been anything to him, even if she had not been his wife, for her voice was firmer as she said—"I am afraid I am taking a great liberty, sir; but—"

"Well, go on," he said, encouragingly, as she paused.

"My husband's life hangs on a thread; and though I see that I have no right to ask you to nurse or please him over the way he has treated you, I felt that you would understand."

She stopped again, and blushed crimson to her very brows.

"Yes, I do understand a great deal, and make allowance for a great deal. Mrs. Young, I have already forgiven your husband, for it is that which was his fault."

"No, it wasn't that, sir. At least, I am very glad you can forgive him; of course; but somehow, I feel sure of that before. What I wanted to ask, was, if—if you would leave here, sir."

"This request, so distinctly and pleasantly put, the young officer was greatly touched. Because he was with wiser eyes, for Mrs. Merridew's hint, he understood how painful it must have been to poor Delia to ask this of him."

For she had loved him. He knew this now, and he recognized her brave efforts to conquer her hopeless passion.

On this account, much as he longed to Brierton, he would have cut off his right hand rather than have stayed."

He told her quite gently that she need not have minded asking him, for he was not used to being asked to do anything for her; and his manner was so kind, even respectful, that Delia wondered now that she had thought her task so difficult.

"I am very much obliged to you for your kindness," she said, very softly, and gravely; "I feel now that I did very wrong to leave you so long, and, as, in a great measure, responsible for all that has happened since. Therefore, the least I can do now is to nurse him back into health."

"Of course; it is not necessary to apologize, Mrs. Young."

"I am afraid it is, sir. Stephen says he has no nurse of late, and I think he has been very ill. However, I hope the future will show that he is penitent for his fault."

"I shall expect great things of him, now that he has you to guide him right."

"But Delia would not have this."

"But that the government intended myself, sir. I don't think I can be much help to others. But there is nothing like trying."

"True! God bless you, Mrs. Young; and I hope fervently, that you will be as happy as you deserve. I can never forget how kind you were to me, and I think I shall always owe you a great deal."

This allusion overcame poor Delia a little

THE EMPTY CRADLE.

BY MAGGIE L. SULLIVAN BURKE.

Standing silent, empty, lonely,
Hooded by no anxious eyes,
It is left to shadows only,
Where the shadows deepest lie;
Father slanders as he lifts it;
Mother cannot bear the sight;
Till not hush, baby's cradle,
Allie note not thee to-night.

Take it from the darkness corner,
Lamp the snowy curtains wide;
Hear thy head, heart-broken mother,
Dumb those lips whose tones were sweet;
Let the stars above and holy,
New baptism that comes with light,
For above its glories lowly,
Allie sleep with thee to-night.

Try the many hopes thou'lt cherished
That so soon an end have found,
Like a temple newly perished,
Leave their fragments scattered round;
But up there a "home eternal,"
Holds new hopes, eternally bright;
For, amid its glories lowly,
Allie wait for thee to-night.

JESSIE DALE.

The Conductor's Daughter;
OR,
The Plot Against the Pennsylvania Railroad.

BY BURN THORNBURY, Esq.,

AUTHOR OF "ST. LEGER'S LOVE," "BAYVIEW-
WOOD," "KEALE, THE SCOUT," "AUG-
HER ABER," ETC.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARBURY'S DUPLICITY.

The person who had fired the shot that had so startled Cecil Parnell and the occupants of Stowell Dale's parlor, was no other than Mr. Jay Marbury.

He did it more out of mere wantonness than with any definite and immediate object. He had played the spy upon Cecil's movements since the latter had taken up his quarters in Green street, and at last had been convinced that it was indeed the conductor's daughter that drew the young man there.

Marbury said nothing to Cecil about the matter, but he decidedly wished that his youthful confederate would have nothing to do with the Dales. Something unfortunate might result from it.

He knew that Cecil was self-willed and indolently obstinate when he became interested in any matter, and that if the charms of Jessie Dale had touched his heart it would be useless to suggest a discontinuance of his regard for her.

The evening that Cecil had called on Stowell Dale, Marbury rather by chance than intention passed the house. It was the hour the young man was lingering at the window.

Marbury, from the opposite side of the street, gazing intently across to the house from which Beatrice Rowland had been abducted, saw and recognized the love-sick Cecil.

"If that isn't Parnell!" he exclaimed to himself, "watching at that window like an ejected spirit at the gates of Paradise! Next he will be finding his way in, and then some one will recognize him as that treacherous, unprincipled fellow who is a danger. I will startle you a little, my fine fellow, that you may be set to thinking about something besides that simple girl."

He drew a small pocket-pistol from his person, and fired high over Cecil's head. Having done this, Marbury rather by chance than intention passed the house. It was the hour the young man was lingering at the window.

Arriving there, he took up his quarters for the remainder of the night at a luxurious hotel, using a partake of a private breakfast in the company of one of his associates. Then parting from his friend, though the hour was yet early for the object he had in view, he sought the office of Belmont Matthews.

It was in a central location, of unpretentious appearance externally, for one of such extraneous tastes as its interior, but furnished most luxuriously—a very bonjour of business in fact.

They met—the wealthy corruptionist and the well-paid and trusted agent.

"Well," said Belmont Matthews, "only, with great inward agitation, 'have you found her?'"

Jay Marbury gave an ominous shake of his head.

"Heavens!" exclaimed his superior, not suspecting that Marbury had lied. "Can it be that we have lost her? Have you searched the city thoroughly? Employed every means?"

"I tell you, Marbury, that she *must* be found. She is a prize worth more to us than I have fully intimated to you before. Only yesterday I obtained such further evidence of her identity as would satisfy any court—should it become necessary to have a divorce suit with one as I trust we shall not have of Beatrice Rowland's just claim to one of the finest estates in America."

"Ah!" remarked Jay Marbury in intense satisfaction; and Belmont Matthews, shrewd and sharp as he was, failed to catch the eager, triumphant expression of the former's countenance.

Let us present Belmont Matthews more fully to the reader. A tall, finely-formed man he was, with a cold, finely-passioned face—one whose intellectual power and activity rarely became demonstrative. To look upon him you would not suspect what capacity for fraud lay hidden under that calm exterior. From his cheek every line of health had gone, and he seemed like one who, having been used to incessant thought and labor, still kept himself up to his standard of exertion, though his physical system was rapidly failing. He gave no attention to this fact, however.

The great and all-absorbing passion of his life was gain—rapacious, remorseless schemer and plotters as he was. He loved gold, it is true, but he cared less for that than for the satisfaction that he obtained when he knew that his plans and plots had prospered. He had no need of further wealth, yet he was as keen in pursuit of it as he was when, abandoning his original calling of gambler, he had found, as he expressed it, his "true vocation."

To be known as the prince of speculation, as the leader in financial intrigue, as the man before whom cliques and rings and corporations trembled, was all he knew of or cared for "honor." He held his place and exercised his power, glorying in them as a tyrant does in cruelty. Mercy he had none; conscience was long ago seared to callousness; and every affection, save love of his schemes of fraud and speculation, had died out.

Yet this man stood on the brink of the grave. But not once did he permit himself to dwell upon the subject of his eternal interests. He had no desire in that direction. This world with its splendid opportunities, with its thronging herds of human victims to prey upon, was quite enough for him. His brain was a private

gold-room of excitement and care, and he kept the door closed to all but strictly "business" thoughts.

It would probably die in harness, scheming up to the last moment.

Such was Belmont Matthews, the man whose mind had lately conceived two ideas of personal enrichment that far surpassed any of his former achievements. The first was to grasp the control of a gigantic and immensely wealthy corporation, and use its power to his own glory; the second was to make his almost imbecile son the husband of the heiress of an estate of millions, and then institute himself manager of it. Very carefully had he prepared his plans for the first attempt—keeping them very close to himself, and delighting in the thought of what a sensation would be caused when he chose at last to display his triumph.

In his second enterprise he had prospered exceedingly up to the period of the escape of Beatrice Rowland from his power. He had planned himself greatly with the contemplation of the prospect of his son wedded to the beautiful woman whose possessions would be so vast, and his own hand directing all.

"To think," continued Matthews, after Marbury had ejaculated that complaint, "Ah!" to think that she should slip away just at this time! It is strange, Marbury, that with the means at your command you have not obtained a clue to her whereabouts. She has no friends in Philadelphia, and as she surely went there, I cannot conceive how it is that she has so utterly disappeared."

"Well, Mr. Matthews, I do not give her up," said Jay Marbury, with no evidence of his deceit in his tones or countenance. "I can find her in that city if any one can. You believe that?"

"Certainly I do. I know your ability, Marbury, and as I intend to reward you handsomely."

"Speak not of that," interrupted the trickster, with effusion. "I know your generosity already."

"It shall be exceeded in this case if you continue to serve me faithfully."

"The person of Beatrice Rowland must be very valuable to you," observed Marbury.

"As the representative of the Day estate you may well think so."

Marbury mused a few moments before he ventured to ask a question that he was greatly interested in.

"Making up his mind to hazard the inquiry," he said, "was formerly known as your daughter, Mr. Matthews; may I ask why you ever permitted her to bear, nominally, that relationship to you?"

Matthews frowned, but his brow soon cleared.

"I found her when she was a little child, Marbury; she must be something to me. Daughter was the most convenient term."

"And you only recently—or comparatively so—discovered that she was heiress to this estate?"

"Not a great while ago—just after that troublesome Rowland pretended to marry her."

"Did he marry her?"

"I will be frank with you, Marbury; yes."

"How fortunate that he is dead."

"It is exceedingly fortunate. If he were alive our cake would be dough, sure enough."

Belmont Matthews gave no sign of guilty emotion as he spoke these words; yet the memory of a crime must have come vividly up before him.

"I have no objection to Rowland," he said with slight emphasis. "I have permitted Beatrice to retain his name, and that is all I care to be reminded of. He was an obstinate and impertinent fellow; but he has gone under, and we shall never be troubled by him again. And yet—"

"And yet what?" asked Marbury.

"It was a good thing that he *did* come upon the scene, for it was through some words that I caught from him, that I was first struck with the possibility that Beatrice was the very individual advertised for the rights of the Day estate."

"And then you commenced investigations?"

"Yes, very quietly and carefully until at last I have in my possession the most ample proof of what I seek. The testimony of one or two living witnesses is all that is needed to establish my claim. I will not be absolutely necessary to obtain other than documentary evidence, but there is one person—a quadroon—what ails you, Marbury?"

"A quadroon, you say?"

"Yes, an intelligent woman, whose mother was the nurse of the infant Beatrice; and who herself for many years was a slave in the Day family. She will not be permitted to give evidence in the courts, and can supply any fragmentary proofs needed to convince doubters of the identity of the claimant."

"The Day family? Little did I know of the existence of this quadroon, which you say is so valuable to you."

"Of course this quadroon never knew the child now grown to be a woman, but her mother did, and there has been much talk about her among their best young mistresses. She would be apt to know, you understand, Marbury? We can—"

"Yes, yes," responded that individual rather abstractedly, for while Belmont Matthews had been addressing him, he had been ejaculating mentally thus: "Can it be that Lucy the quadroon is from the Day family? If so, the fact may come out between her and my lovely prisoner, and on the strength of devotion to one who would have been her mistress, Lucy may be prevailed upon to aid Mrs. Rowland to escape. I must, if possible, secure these proofs, and hurry back to Philadelphia, or the bird will have flown."

"The quadroon, Marbury? What of her?" questioned Mr. Matthews, some what sharply, not having forgotten the surprise his companion had manifested to hear that term used.

"I have a quadroon in my service in Philadelphia," answered Marbury, speaking truthfully, because he thought there was no necessity to prevaricate, "and it may be that she is the very one to whom you refer. She answers to the description you have given of her."

"I do not forget that," said Marbury. His companion looked at his watch.

"I have a pressing engagement with Crofton & Co., a half hour from this," he said; "and as I wish first to see my friend Glendinning, you will excuse me. Let me hear from you immediately upon your return to Philadelphia, and daily—nay, hourly—thereafter until I learn of your success in the affair I have entrusted to your management. Look well to our other interests there, and your fidelity shall be rewarded."

Jay Marbury surveyed his shapely figure complacently, fully convinced that charms like his must prove irresistible.

Sherwin looked upon the handsome villain in admiration not only of his person, but of his confidence and "pluck."

"He usually has, I believe," he observed.

"Something particularly promising," said Marbury.

"Might I inquire its nature?"

"All that I can say is, that if successful it will give him control of an immense sum of money, amounting to millions. He has employed me to assist him—and I in turn, would like to employ you."

"If I can assist you in any way, I will be glad to do so," said Marbury.

"Would you like to help me make a clean sweep of the stakes?"

"But how? I do not understand you."

"The wily villain was already sure of his man, and so he said."

"I give you such a chance to fill your pockets as even Belmont Matthews would not refuse. I intend to take the wind out of your employer's sails, and in a way of which he cannot complain—all's fair in love and war, you know. You have seen the lady known as Mrs. Beatrice Rowland, Sherwin?"

"Yes," said Sherwin, in wonder.

"She is the heiress to the estate Matthews has lately become interested in."

"But it is said she is to marry Mr. Matthews's son."

"So it was planned, with what object you need not be told. But the lady refused to have her name so prominently connected with a transaction of this kind, and to escape a union with the young man, fled from our employer's house."

"Well?"

"He offers me, to restore her to him, a sum of money that I will not name for fear of exciting incredulity in my statement. He has offered me a large sum, but I have not informed Matthews of the fact."

Marbury winked expressively. His companion understood him.

"And now," pursued the former, "I wish you to abstract from Matthews's private possession a packet containing documents of the Day estate, the same being the proofs of the identity of Mrs. Rowland with this missing heiress. For that service I will pay you one hundred thousand dollars. Do you agree to attempt it?"

"I have no objection to your proposition," said Marbury, "but I will not be absolutely necessary to obtain other than documentary evidence, but there is one person—a quadroon—what ails you, Marbury?"

"A quadroon, you say?"

"Yes, an intelligent woman, whose mother was the nurse of the infant Beatrice; and who herself for many years was a slave in the Day family. She will not be permitted to give evidence in the courts, and can supply any fragmentary proofs needed to convince doubters of the identity of the claimant."

"The Day family? Little did I know of the existence of this quadroon, which you say is so valuable to you."

"Of course this quadroon never knew the child now grown to be a woman, but her mother did, and there has been much talk about her among their best young mistresses. She would be apt to know, you understand, Marbury? We can—"

"Yes, yes," responded that individual rather abstractedly, for while Belmont Matthews had been addressing him, he had been ejaculating mentally thus: "Can it be that Lucy the quadroon is from the Day family? If so, the fact may come out between her and my lovely prisoner, and on the strength of devotion to one who would have been her mistress, Lucy may be prevailed upon to aid Mrs. Rowland to escape. I must, if possible, secure these proofs, and hurry back to Philadelphia, or the bird will have flown."

"The quadroon, Marbury? What of her?" questioned Mr. Matthews, some what sharply, not having forgotten the surprise his companion had manifested to hear that term used.

"I have a quadroon in my service in Philadelphia," answered Marbury, speaking truthfully, because he thought there was no necessity to prevaricate, "and it may be that she is the very one to whom you refer. She answers to the description you have given of her."

"I do not forget that," said Marbury. His companion looked at his watch.

"I have a pressing engagement with Crofton & Co., a half hour from this," he said; "and as I wish first to see my friend Glendinning, you will excuse me. Let me hear from you immediately upon your return to Philadelphia, and daily—nay, hourly—thereafter until I learn of your success in the affair I have entrusted to your management. Look well to our other interests there, and your fidelity shall be rewarded."

Jay Marbury surveyed his shapely figure complacently, fully convinced that charms like his must prove irresistible.

Sherwin looked upon the handsome villain in admiration not only of his person, but of his confidence and "pluck."

"He usually has, I believe," he observed.

"Something particularly promising," said Marbury.

"Might I inquire its nature?"

"All that I can say is, that if successful it will give him control of an immense sum of money, amounting to millions. He has employed me to assist him—and I in turn, would like to employ you."

"If I can assist you in any way, I will be glad to do so," said Marbury.

"Would you like to help me make a clean sweep of the stakes?"

"But how? I do not understand you."

"The wily villain was already sure of his man, and so he said."

"I give you such a chance to fill your pockets as even Belmont Matthews would not refuse. I intend to take the wind out of your employer's sails, and in a way of which he cannot complain—all's fair in love and war, you know. You have seen the lady known as Mrs. Beatrice Rowland, Sherwin?"

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"Well?"

"He offers me, to restore her to him, a sum of money that I will not name for fear of exciting incredulity in my statement. He has offered me a large sum, but I have not informed Matthews of the fact."

Marbury was always a lucky fellow," he said to himself, "and I believe he will win this time. I am with him in the venture. Here, Marbury," he continued aloud, "is my hand. Success to us both!"

"With all my heart I can say amen to that," responded he, cordially grasping the open palm.

The minor details of their conspiracy were agreed upon, and then the two separated, Sherwin returning to the office, and Marbury taking the train for Philadelphia. His impatience to be there again made the swift express seem slow. A disturbing thought ran in his mind in connection with the quadroon. If she were once to discover that her charge was the daughter of her former mistress, and such a revelation might readily be brought about, for Lucy he knew was fond of questioning and of being questioned—he feared that notwithstanding her usual faithfulness she could be prevailed upon to lend herself to assisting the prisoner to escape.

To be sure, Marbury was there, but the shrewd and quick-witted quadroon might circumvent him.

"CHAPTER XV.
THE VICTIM OF HIS OWN PLOT.

"Hetty," said Jack Clayton as he found opportunity one day, "do you know whether Mant Edwards takes a lunch before he goes out with the night-train?"

Hetty (Gandy) was waiting-maid at the public house near the depot, where Knickerbocker boarded.

"Yes, he does," said Hetty. "Why do you ask?"

"Never mind that just yet. Do you serve it, Hetty?"

"Sometimes, if I am up so late."

"Does he drink coffee?"

"Nothing else."

"And he never takes anything at the bar?"

Hetty tossed her head contemptuously.

"Not Mant Edwards," said she; "he is too stingy."

"You wouldn't mind doing me a little service, would you, Hetty?"

"She had no objection, for she had foolishly taken it into her head, and she would not refuse."

"What is it, Jack?"

"I'll tell you after you promise, and give you a kiss before."

Hetty was a plain, unattractive girl, and kismet didn't reach her large lips very often—especially lovers' kisses; but she wasn't to be bought too cheaply.

"A kiss!" she said with an affected disdain.

"Don't you know?" asked Jack, wilfully misunderstanding her.

"I mean that a kiss is nothing," returned Hetty, sharply.

"Lizzie Allen don't think so."

A jealous light leaped to the girl's eyes; her freckled face darkened wickedly. She felt the rage too—they're so mighty thick, her, she imagined she could have been the engineer's sweetheart, and some day have her house named after her. Hetty wanted to get rid of that part of her name; she was sick of the sound of it.

"Hetty," said the wily villain, whispering low, "never mind Mant Edwards. I can be as much to you as ever he could."

(She flushed brightly at these equivocal words.) "But wouldn't you like to help take him down a peg or two, and that Lizzie who is always sticking her nose up at you?"

Hetty did not speak, but she looked her willingness to take that sort of revenge.

Clayton went on—

"I've a grudge—a bitter grudge—against that fellow, and I want him paid off. I want to see him disgraced. I want her to see her name on a sign that says 'Mant Edwards'."

"You've changed in your feelings toward Lizzie," said Hetty, seeing her opportunity, and desiring both to probe Jack's heart in that direction, and to take revenge for his late insinuation that she need not have a word to say for herself.

"Yes, I have," returned Jack, savagely. "I hate 'em both."

The girl looked satisfied as she heard this evidently genuine expression of his sentiments toward them.

"What do you want to do to Mant Edwards?"

"He should be paid off, as I said."

"How do you propose to do that?"

"He should be paid off, as I said."

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"How do you propose to do that?"

"He should be paid off, as I said."

before a grip like that of a giant was laid upon his arm.

A watching form had sprung upon him. "Can't it be the set, at last, you villain!" shouted a grim voice.

Jack struggled desperately to free himself, but in vain.

"Signal the train to stop!" he heard shouted.

A dozen men seemed to have appeared upon the scene.

Some threw, or attempted to throw, the obstructions from the track. Others swung a red warning light.

The train was stopped, but not very promptly.

"We've nabbed one of the murderous wretches," cried a voice. "Caught him in the very act."

Cries of execration arose in response.

"What shall be done with him?"

"Lash him

"If they have met?"
 "If there is a 'if,' I shall find them together, and if I do—"
 "Well?"
 "London has seen the last of my lady. I find her abiding place for her, and as for him—well, that will come after; but if he lives to hold of his conquest it will be no fault of mine. Will you come with me?"

"To the station? Oh, yes, if you like."
 "But then that—Westminster?"
 "No, thank you; I've no fancy for mixing myself up in other people's matrimonial disputes. I will do anything in town for you."

"Make some excuse to Claudia for me—no matter what—it is not the true one. I was to have seen her to-night. Don't let her forget me."

"Rich adulterers are not easily forgotten," said Mr. Bertram, with a sneer. "The diamonds with which you have enhanced your love in that quarter will keep your memory green, you may be sure. But about young Vavasour, his journey must have been a very sudden affair. I saw him yesterday, and he mentioned nothing about it; indeed, he was making plans for to-day, which I am quite sure did not include such a long journey as from London to Westminster."

"Bah! Twaddle to turn you off the scent! Her wishes would draw him anywhere; but I am afraid I shall spoil their meeting. Good-bye, Bertram; my train starts at half-past four. I've only just time."

"Good-bye, if you will go," Mr. Bertram replied. "I hope you will not find things so black as they seem now. My best remembrance to Lady Nortonshill and Mrs. Eversfield. I suppose she is with her?"

"Some one is with her—her aunt, by the description. 'One more, good-bye!'"
 And hurrying off, he had driven away from the door before Austin Bertram had recovered from his astonishment at his arrival.

"Well," he said to himself, as he cab rattled off, "the drama is in full swing now. I think the denouement is coming about sooner than I expected, after all."

Meanwhile, Lord Nortonshill was speeding away as fast as the express could carry him toward Westminster, his heart full of bitter rage and jealousy, vowing all sorts of vengeance against his offending wife and Francis Vavasour.

The thought of there being any other reason why they should be there except to meet each other never entered his head. He thought only of the fact of their being there at the same time, and elated and flattered accordingly.

At the little station there was but one conveyance waiting, and he secured it, pushing almost rudely by some other passengers who were waiting their chance of getting to the village, and bidding the man roughly to drive fast.

In a very few minutes he was at the hotel, starting the landlady by his abrupt appearance, and the driver by the snarl with which he flung his money to him. It was unlike what he had hitherto known of Lord Nortonshill, who was usually courteous in his manner to his inferiors.

"Let me speak to you a minute," he said to the landlady, drawing her aside a little. "My wife, Lady Nortonshill, is she here?"

"Certainly, my lord," the woman answered, in surprise; "my lady and Mrs. Eversfield are both here. They came down in the afternoon train, and engaged rooms. One is but a poor place for her ladyship; but—"

"Good enough," he said, fiercely. "Show me to her room at once, without announcing me!"

"I beg your pardon, my lord, my lady is out."

"Out?"
 "Yes, my lord."

"Where is she gone?"
 "To the lodge, I believe. Old Hodgson's wife is dying, and I understood her ladyship to say she had sent for her to come and see her."

"A mere excuse, and he is gone with her. I suppose?"

He recollected himself in a second when he saw her look of amazement, and would have given much to recall the sentence he had uttered. She had no idea what he meant, however—she only thought his manner strange and rude. He was bursting with rage, and could hardly keep from blustering out the reason for his hot-headed pursuit of his wife to all whom it might or might not concern. She answered him, innocently enough.

"He, my lord? It was Mrs. Eversfield who came down with Lady Nortonshill—no one else."

"And is she gone with her?"
 "No, my lord."

"Of course not. Which is her room?"
 "I will tell her."

"No, you won't. No announcing—no time to make up a story. Show me the door, and I'll announce myself to my good friend, Mrs. Eversfield."

The landlady indicated the door, and went away to her own room, immediately confiding her belief to her husband that Lord Nortonshill had gone mad, he was so wild and queer in his manner and words.

Mrs. Eversfield really was overcome by fatigue. She was not a young woman, and the long journey from Paris, without sufficient rest, had knocked her up.

She knew that Alma was safe, little dreaming of the meeting that had taken place not half an hour after she left the house, and she settled herself down to enjoy an hour's thorough quiet.

The landlady officiously did all in her power to make her comfortable. She brought pillows and cushions, and made up a bright fire, and recommended successively everything eatable and drinkable in the house for the benefit of her customer; but Mrs. Eversfield took nothing but a glass of wine and a biscuit.

A quarter of an hour's refreshing rest considerably restored her, and she lay in the last-laid bed, with a sense of great exertion, thinking till she fell into a doze.

From this she was aroused by the heavy opening of the door, and started up in alarm, to see her niece's husband standing before her.

"Nortonshill!" she exclaimed, hardly able to speak from sheer amazement.

"Yes, madam," he replied, with the outward coolness which some men can assume to cover great excitement. "I have come to fetch my wife—to stop, if I can, the shameless meeting she has arranged here with her old lover."

"Are you going to my lord? Alma has made no arrangement. We came here alone, and the cause of our coming—"

"Oh, I have heard the repeated cause, madam; but do not try to deceive me with so shallow an artifice. She came here to meet Francis Vavasour."

down here without knowing it, or that he came to Westminster without the knowledge of your being about to visit this place?"

"I do not know what you are talking about, my lord," Mrs. Eversfield said, placidly. "You must ask your wife and myself if your absurd suspicions, and I must beg of you to leave my room. I am both fatigued and unwell, and therefore unable to argue with you in your present state, which can only attribute to a temporary aberration of intellect, or to your having taken too much wine."

"You play your part to perfection," he himed, between his teeth; "but it won't do. Francis Vavasour is here. I saw him start on his journey, and you, who should uphold my wife in keeping up the semblance of virtue at least, have brought her here to meet him."

"As I am a living woman I have not, Nortonshill. You will repeat all this when you come to your senses."

"We shall see. Where is she?"
 "Gone to the lodge, to see old Hodgson."

"Alone?"
 "No; one of the servants went with her, at her own request."

"To return alone, doubtless. It would hardly be convenient to have company all day."

"You are wrong again. Hodgson will bring her back."

"And allow no time for a precious meeting. It would be too cruel."

"As I live, Nortonshill, I believe you are mad! Alma and I know no more of that young man's movements than a baby. If he is here, it is by no contrivance or wish of mine. Do you wish to see a woman wrong to say so?"

"Do I? We shall see. I am going to seek her. Where I find her I shall find him, or I am much mistaken. Nay, you must not accompany me," he went on, as Mrs. Eversfield rose from her seat. "I can bring her back, never fear."

"I could not come with you if I would," she said, sinking back. "I was worn out and ill before you came, and your brutality has terrified me exceedingly."

She burst into tears of mingled weakness and weariness as she spoke, and he left her with a shudder on his face.

She sat trembling, and dressing she knew not what, after he went away. She really believed he had lost his senses, and began to fear he might do something desperate.

She had no idea of Frank's presence in the neighborhood; consequently, much of what his lordship had said was utterly incomprehensible to her. She sat shivering and trembling for nearly an hour, and at last, of that time she heard his light footsteps coming along the quiet street.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FACE TO FACE.

I will not take him by the throat and strangle him, but I could do it—I could do it!

It is not now a time, my lord, to be here. I have no time to be here. I have no time to be here.

"Heaven!" exclaimed Mrs. Eversfield to herself, as the door banged after the retreating figure of her niece's husband, and she sank back in her chair with a sigh of relief. "What an excitable man he is. Thank goodness he has gone. Ah, he's like all the rest—fancies that no matter what his own conduct may be, his wife's must be, like Caesar's, above suspicion. He's a mad-brained fool, and unless he is very careful, will drive Alma to an estrangement."

And the lady, with a portentous sigh over the disagreeable attendant on her position as *chaperone*, tried to dismiss the subject from her mind; but it would return, and filled her with a vague feeling of uneasiness which she found it difficult to dispel.

"What on earth could have put such an idea into his head as to look for Frank here?" she asked herself. "Pshaw, the thing's impossible!"

But, as the reader is aware, she was mistaken on this point, as she would have been if she had known what was passing in the park even at that moment; but she was all unconscious of the singular meeting which had taken place between Alma and her quondam lover, and so looked herself to her room again, feeling no little aggrieved at being thus hunted down and spied upon, as she called it, by her nephew-in-law.

"I don't care," she muttered. "I'll have nothing further to do with it. I wash my hands of the whole affair. That man is enough to drive one into a state of semi-insanity, I should say."

She quite ignored the fact that she had been the prime mover in promoting her niece's marriage to that same man, and how she had schemed and contrived to induce Alma to accept him. She only looked upon him now as a heartless tyrant who spent his wife's fortune, and seemed to care little or nothing for her happiness or comfort.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "a fine widows' chase he'll have looking for young Vavasour here. Alma was a fool to come scampering over the country in this fashion after an old woman; but she had done nothing wrong, and if her precious husband comes back here, he'll get a piece of my mind, that's all I've got to say. Good heavens, Nortonshill! What is it?"

Her frightened utterance of the last words was caused by his lord's sudden entrance into the apartment. He rushed in without knocking, and if she had been alarmed at him before he started on his apparently ridiculous errand, she was doubly frightened now.

"No, you are here," he cried, his face distorted with rage, and his features working with suppressed passion.

Mrs. Eversfield started to her feet, and recoiled from him in terror.

"What is it? Has anything happened?" she inquired with her hand upon the bell, for she was terribly frightened at his strange manner.

"Has anything happened?" he repeated, in a mocking tone. "No, nothing, nothing—at least, 'tis nothing new. I have only discovered that, when it suits her convenience, a lady does not scruple to tell a white lie. Bah! she is white, is she? No, by heaven! but the blackest and foulest that ever was invented."

"Who has lied to you, my lord?"
 "You," he retorted, and she drew herself indignantly up at the insult.

"Remember, if you please, that you are speaking to a lady, Lord Nortonshill," she said, in a cold tone, though she was trembling in every limb with fear.

"She thought he must be going mad," madam; but for that remembrance I might have said 'white lie.'"

"What have I done?"
 "Done! How dared you tell me that Frank Vavasour was not here?"

"I told you truth—he is not here."

"You told a lie, madam, and you know that he is here."

"My lord," said the poor lady, and her terror was getting very great now, "I do not understand you."

"Oh, it is no time for us to choose words, Mrs. Eversfield. I have seen your

paragon—your *preux chevalier*—within this last quarter of an hour."

"But with no knowledge of mine, nor Alma's, if he is here."

"Of course not; how could it be," he replied, scornfully, "with a sudden burst of passion, 'and with her knowledge!'"

When I find her in his arms, when I see him fold her to his breast and press lips to lips unchoked and unrebated! Not with her knowledge, forsooth, when I hear her tell him that she has never loved any one else, that she owes nothing to me, by heaven! But she shall, though that—but I cannot recall it. The day of reckoning has arrived, and it shall be a terrible one. As for your share in this most virtuous plot, madam, I owe you some thanks, since it has opened my eyes to the faith and virtue of my wife. Rest assured that I shall not forget the obligation, and for the future I will relieve you of your charge, and take my matrimonial duties on my own shoulders. I shall know better how to fulfill them after this escape of hers."

Mrs. Eversfield heard him with her ears, but in such a maze of bewilderment that she could not in the least understand what he meant, and his wild words and excited manner seemed to her the veriest ravings of a madman.

"I do not understand a word of what you have said," she began, with outward calmness at least. "If that young man is really here—"

"If I thundered his lordship; 'I tell you that I saw him, heard him speak, and saw him go,' he is here."

"Permit me to finish, my lord. I say that if that young man is here, it is strange that no one should have seen him, and told me, and it is entirely without the knowledge of myself or Alma. You have been polite enough to call on me, in plain words, the contents of which you are quite welcome to see if you are curious."

"Thank you, I do not wish to see them."

"If you prefer my company, my dear madam," he said, ironically, "I am entirely at your service after I have dispatched these, though you look too much fatigued for conversation. But you will have to excuse me when Mr. Vavasour comes to claim me."

"Mr. Vavasour?"
 "Yes."

She laid her hand imploringly on his arm.

"Oh, Lord Nortonshill! what does this mean? You are not going to quarrel with him?"

"No, madam," he replied, with a sneer. "I am only going to kill him!"

(To be continued in our next. Continued on p. 3.)

And Frank Vavasour, with his heart weighed down by sorrow and anxiety, left the side of that humble death-bed, left to the husband whose voice she would never respond to more on this side of the dark river—and went his way, determined, if possible, for Alma's sake, to explain to Lord Nortonshill how the accidental meeting had come about.

Meanwhile, the pair had arrived at the inn with his wife on his arm, with her hand never exchanged a word since they quitted the cottage.

In the hall they were met by Mrs. Eversfield, eager to read in their faces what had happened. Her niece would have sprung to her side, but his lordship intercepted.

"Not to-night, my lady," he said, with the most profound politeness. "You have a long journey before you, and will require some repose before you start."

He led her to the room prepared for her, still with the same chilling silence, looked around to see that everything was in order, and left the apartment, but he spoke a few words before he went.

"I should recommend you to eat and sleep," he said. "Your journey will commence early, and you will need all your strength."

He shut and locked the door, and made his way to Mrs. Eversfield's sitting room.

"I am sorry to intrude upon a lady," he remarked, "but there does not seem another room ready. Will you excuse my ringing for pen and ink, and allow me to suggest that you retire to rest. You look tired."

"But Alma—"

"Oh! do not alarm yourself on her account. She is quite safe, and as comfortable as the inn people can make her."

"But what are you going to do?"
 "Only send off a couple of telegrams, the contents of which you are quite welcome to see if you are curious."

"Thank you, I do not wish to see them."

"If you prefer my company, my dear madam," he said, ironically, "I am entirely at your service after I have dispatched these, though you look too much fatigued for conversation. But you will have to excuse me when Mr. Vavasour comes to claim me."

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(To be continued in our next. Continued on p. 3.)

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

THE head of Captain Jack and Robinson are to be preserved in the Army Medical Museum.

ALBERT L. J. of Springfield, Ill., committed suicide lately, rather than break his promise made to his dying wife, five years ago, that he would not marry again. He was enamored of a young lady.

JAMES PARKER, an elderly gentleman of Ford do Lane Co., Wis., sat down to the breakfast table in the morning, and found his eyes to death without a spasm of pain.

A lady with five children, just arrived from Germany, reached Williams port, Pa., a few days ago to join her husband. She was startled to hear that he had died last winter.

An Italian father and daughter are fighting in the courts at St. Louis over \$10,000, the proceeds of twenty years of street begging in the large American cities.

Captain Hall, of the Polar, left a sealed package, with directions that it be opened during the lifetime of Lady Franklin. It is supposed to contain some terrible revelations of suffering and dire exigency experienced by the members of the Franklin expedition.

A demonstrative maiden in Skowhegan, Me., recently kicked a persistent suitor who had used himself, but playing the means of self-defense, and of her character, NATHANIEL MAY FAY, Box 100, Brookline, N. Y.

The Huntingdon Journal relates that recently a couple of hands on a wood train prepared their dinner upon a chopping block. Among other luxuries, they made themselves a cup of coffee. However, while drinking the coffee, they thought it had a queer taste, and immediately after they were seized with violent vomiting. They determined to examine their food, and in the bottom of it they found a copperhead snake.

San Francisco—rather the atmosphere above it—was the scene of a balloon wedding lately. Professor Luy, an aeronaut, was the groom. The nature of the bride is not given. A brave justice of the peace accompanied the pair above the clouds, and tied the marital knot.

A Memphis paper states that during a fire in that city the other day, a woman carried a barrel of flour down stairs without bursting a hoop. In ordinary times it exhausts her to strike her husband twice with the poker.

She spoke coldly and defiantly, though she was in mortal terror, but she concealed it admirably.

"You will go with me to the inn," he replied, "and be thankful that I have discovered your perjury in time to stop your scandalous proceedings. I will take care that you make no mistake."

"My lord," Frank began, "allow me."

"Be patient, sir, I will talk to you afterward," his lordship bimed between his set teeth. "If you are not a coward as the inn likewise, and face me like a man."

"I will come," Lord Nortonshill, for your wife's sake, whom you are wronging by your base suspicions."

"Suspicious! bah! I will not bandy words with you, my heroic young spark. I saw her in your arms. Do I want any further proof? If you make any tender adieu to make, better speak them now. You will not be likely to meet again."

"Unnecessarily coward!" exclaimed the young man, whilst the unhappy Alma stood as if turned to stone, neither speaking nor moving.

"Now madam," said his lordship, "if you are ready, we will go."

But she walked past him, and held out her hands to Frank.

"Good-bye," she said. "You know that I am innocent of any wrong doing. What a hypocrite of me, I feel as though I were going to my death. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye! Heaven help you!" he responded. "There will come a day, Lady Nortonshill, when your perfect innocence will be fully proved."

He pressed her hand respectfully, and only saying to Lord Nortonshill that he would follow him directly, turned and went up stairs again. But it was too late. Whatever secret the old woman had to tell would remain unknown to the end of all things. Her mind was wandering now, and could not grasp any single idea for more than a moment at a time. Time he narrowed to a few short hours for her, and the remainder of her frail life was soon to be swallowed up in the mighty abyss of eternity.

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